Cherra Hills	111	163
Nonkpoo	69	104
Total	4,000*	

The following information regarding the general aspect of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district, with some additions, is derived from Sir William Hunter's Statistical Account of Assam. The district consists almost entirely of hills, only a very small portion lying in the plains. The slope of the hills on the southern side is very steep until a table-land is met with at an elevation of about 4,000 feet at Cherrapunji. Higher up there is another plateau at Mawphlang. This is the highest portion of the hills, some villages being found at as high an elevation as close on 6,000 feet above sea level. Fifteen miles to the east of Mawphlang, and in the same range, is situated the civil station of Shillong, at an average elevation of about 4,900 feet. The elevation of the Shillong Peak, the highest hill in the district, is 6,450 feet above sea level. On the northern side of the hills are two plateaux, one between 1,000 and 2,000 feet below the level of Shillong, and another at an elevation of about 2,000 feet above sea level. In general features all these plateaux are much alike, and consist of a succession of undulating downs, broken here and there by the valleys of the larger hill streams. In the higher ranges, where the hills have been denuded of forest, the country is covered with short grass, which becomes longer and more rank in the lower elevations. This denudation of forest has been largely due to the wood being used by the Khasis for fuel for iron smelting in days gone by. The Government, however, has taken steps to protect the remaining forests from further spoliation. A remarkable feature is the presence of numerous sacred groves situated generally just below the brows of the hills. In these woods are to be found principally oak and rhododendron trees. The fir-tree (Pinus Khasia) is first met with on the road from Gauhati to Shillong, at Umsning, at an elevation of about 1,500 feet. In the neighbourhood of Shillong the fir grows profusely, but the finest fir-trees are to be seen

* The figures for Khasi population in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district will be found under "Statistics."

I: Garden E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR? Khasi AR?

the ground and roll about. A silver ornament, or a few rupees, placed at the top, reward the successful climber." A leg of mutton, or a piece of pork fixed at the top of this pole would render the pastime identical with the "greasy-pole" climbing of English villages. The following are some other Khasi games:—

Wrestling: two persons grasping each other's hands with the fingers interlocked, and then trying to push one another down; tug-of-war with a piece of stick, the two combatants placing their feet one against the other; butting at one another like bulls, and trying to upset each other (*ka ber mase*); long jump; high jump; blind-man's buff; flying kites; pitching cowries into a hole in the ground; a game like marbles, only played with round pebbles, and others.

MANUFACTURES.

The manufactures of the Khasis are few in number, and do not seem to show any tendency to increase. On the contrary two of the most important industries, the smelting of iron ore and the forging of iron implements therefrom, and the cotton-spinning industries at Mynso and Sukiaga, show signs of dying out. Ploughshares and hoes and bill-hooks can now be obtained more cheaply from the plains than from the forges in the hills, and Manchester piece goods are largely taking the place of cloths of local manufacture. The iron industry in former days was an important one, and there is abundant evidence that the workings were on a considerable scale, e.g. at Nongkrem and Laitlyngkot, in the shape of large granite boulders which have fallen to the ground from the sides of the hills owing to the softer rock which filled the interstices between the boulders having been washed out by the iron-workers, these persons being to dig out the softer ferruginous rock, and then extract the iron ore from it by means of washing. The softer rock having been removed, the heavier portions fell by their own weight, and rolled down to the bottom of the slopes, the result being the great number of boulders to be seen near the sites of these workings.

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

Colonel Lister, writing in 1853, estimated that 20,000 maunds of iron were exported from the hills in the shape of hoes to the Assam Valley, and in lumps of pig iron to the Surma Valley, where it was used by boat-builders for clamps. Nowadays the smelting of iron is carried on in very few places. There are still smelting-houses at Nongkrem and Nongpreng, but these are practically the only places left where smelting of iron ore goes on; there are many forges where rough iron brought from the plains is melted down and forged into bill-hooks and hoes. Messrs. Yule and Cracroft have described the native process of smelting iron, and it is only necessary to refer to their papers if information is required on the subject. Yule's account is a very full one, and is to be found at page 853, vol. xi part ii. of the *Journal* of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. The system pursued, both in the extraction and in the subsequent smelting of the ore, is the same at the present day as that described by Yule. Dr. Oldham, writing in 1863, says, "The quality of this Khasi iron is excellent for all such purposes as Swedish iron is now used for. The impurity of the blooms (or masses of the metal in a molten state), however, as they are sent to market, is a great objection to its use, and the waste consequent thereon renders it expensive. It would also form steel or wootz (Indian steel) of excellent quality. I have no doubt that the manufacture could be greatly improved and possibly extended." Dr. Oldham, however, goes on to remark that the manufacture of iron could not be very much extended, owing to the scanty dissemination of the ore in the rocks, and the consequent high cost of obtaining it. At present the want of any permanent supply of water prevents the natives from working for more than a few days during the year, whilst the rains are heavy, and they can readily obtain sufficient force of water for the washing of the ore from its matrix. The export of iron in any form from the district has now almost died out, only a few bars being brought down by the Khasis from Laitlum, in Khaloophet, to the Burdwar and Fakeharl markets in the Kamrup District of the Assam Valley. Iron of English manufacture has, of course, much cheapened the market, but probably the fact that the parts of the country in the neighbourhood of the rocks which contain the metal have

been denuded completely of timber, charcoal being necessary for smelting, has affected the production almost as much as the presence of cheap iron in the market.

MANUFACTURE OF ERI SILK CLOTHS AND COTTON CLOTHS IN THE JAINTIA HILLS.

The number of weavers in the district at the last Census was 533. This number in the Census Report is ascribed to the cotton industry, no mention being made of weavers of silk. The spinning of Eri silk thread, and weaving it into cloths is, however, a fairly considerable industry amongst the Khyrwang and Nongtung villages of the Jaintia Hills. The Nongtungs and Khyrwangs rear their own Eri worms, and spin the silk from the cocoons. The late Mr. Stack, in his admirable note on silk in Assam, says, "Throughout the whole range of the southern hills, from the Mikir country, Eri thread is in great request for weaving those striped cloths, in which the mountaineers delight," but this observation should have been confined to the Jaintia Hills portion of this district, the Khasis not weaving themselves either in silk or cotton. The Khasis obtain their silk cloths from the Assam Valley, and from the Nongtung or Khyrwang villages in Jaintia. The latter villages have given the name to the striped cloth, *ka jain Khyrwang*, which is almost invariably worn by the Syntengs. Mr. Stack has given in detail a description of the silk industry in Assam; and it is not therefore necessary to go over the same ground here. The Khyrwang cloth is red and white, mauve and white, or chocolate and white, the cloth being worn by both men and women. The Khyrwang cloths vary in price from Rs. 5 to Rs. 25, according to size and texture. These cloths are the handiwork of women alone, and a woman working every day regularly will take six months to manufacture a cloth valued at Rs. 25; but, as a rule, in the leisurely manner in which they work, it takes a year to complete it.